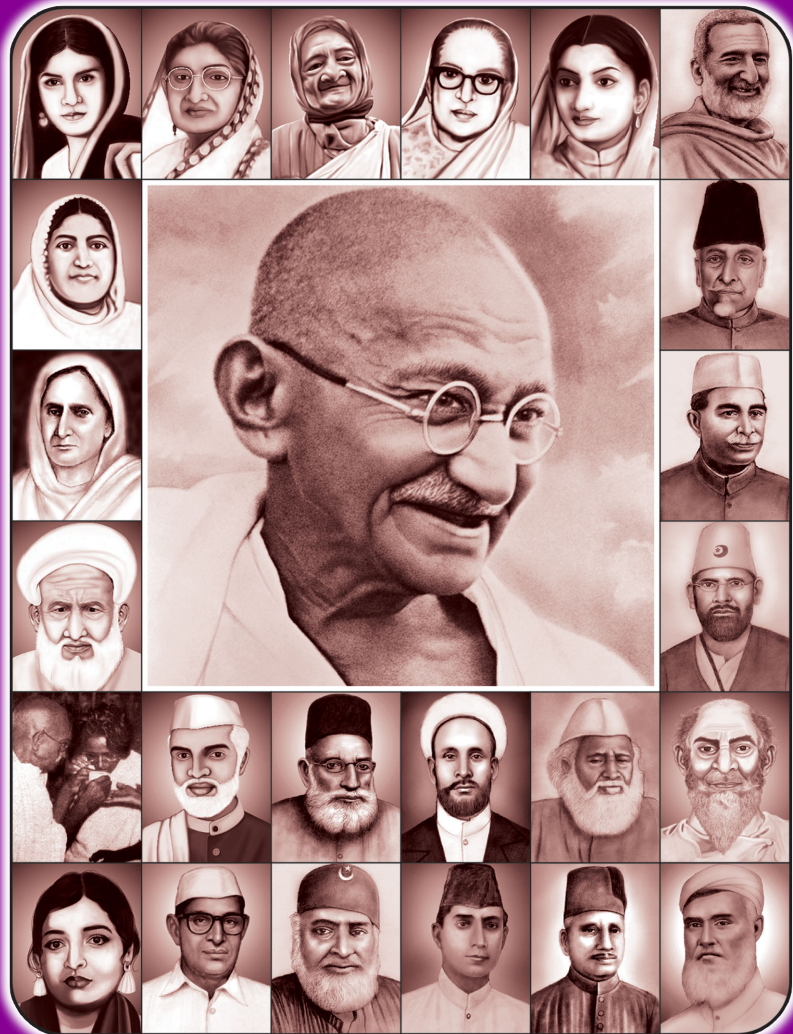


# **MAHATMA GANDHI**

## **MUSLIM ASSOCIATES - FOLLOWERS**



**Syed Naseer Ahamed**

**English Translation :  
BVK Purnanandam**

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Ever since Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly known to the world as Mahatma Gandhi, who commanded the momentum and course of the Indian National Movement, the last phase of Indian Freedom Struggle, took the first steps to convert it into a popular movement, several Muslim freedom Fighters extended remarkable support, as associates and followers, to him and followed his path with utmost integrity of thought, word and action.

When Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India as Barrister after studying Law in London and was trying to establish himself as a lawyer, he got a very good opportunity. That opportunity laid foundation for a historical process which transformed ‘ Barrister M K Gandhi’. into ‘Mahathma Gandhi’ and ‘Father of the Nation’.

### **DADA ABDULLAH AS A GUIDE**

Gandhi’s association with Dada Abdullah and the situations he faced in South Africa played a crucial role in turning Barrister M K Gandhi’s focus towards public work. Abdullah was the major partner in Messers Dada Abdullah and Company in South Africa. Abdoola Hajee Adam Jhaveri was his full name. He was a native of Gandhiji’s home town Porbandar in Gujarat State. Several law suits regarding his business firm were proceeding in the courts of South Africa. Shaik Abdul Kareem Jhaveri, a partner in Messers Dada Abdulla & company, invited Gandhi to South Africa to assist his lawyers in those law suits. When Gandhi reached South Africa in 1892 in response to the invitation, Dada Abdullah himself personally received Gandhi at port and took him to his firm’s quarters. Since then Dada Abdullah remained a guide to Gandhi in all his endeavours in South Africa.

Gandhi saw how Indians were discriminated against in South Africa and he himself experienced it. He understood the helplessness of Indians there. He gathered more details from Dada Abdullah and his colleagues. Dada Abdullh guided Gandhi in several situations he encountered in this



DADA ABDULLAH (-1912)

regard. There were occasions when Dada Abdullah restrained Gandhiji from adopting certain local ways saying that they would be detrimental to the self respect of Indians in South Africa. Gandhiji mentioned this in his autobiography 'The Story of my Experiments with Truth' In a farewell meeting held in Dada Abdullah's office on the occasion of Gandhiji's leaving for India in 1894, there came up for discussion a news item about a piece of legislation to abolish the voting rights of Indian's who had been living in South Africa for a long time.to be enacted by South African government.

### **N.I.C WITH ABDULLAH AS PRESIDENET & GANDHI AS SECRETARY**

Natal Indian Congress was formed on 22nd May 1894 with Dada Abdullah as president and M K Gandhi as secretary in pursuance of the decision taken in the farewell meeting to fight against the disenfranchising bill. The following persons assumed charge as Vice Presidents of the Natal Indian Congress. Hajee Mahomed Hajee Dada, Abdool Kadir, Hajee Dada Hajee Habib, Moosa Hajee Adam, P. Dawjee Mahomed, Peeran Mahomed, Hoosen Miran, Adamjee Miankhan, Moosa Hajee Cassim, Mahomed Cassim Jeeva, Dawad Mahomed, Hoosen Cassim Amod Tili, Omar Hajee Aba, Hajee Mahomed (P.M. Burg), Camroodeen (P. M. Burg). The following prominent persons like Goolam Hoosen Randeri, Shamshoodeen, G.A. Bassa, Ibrahim M. Khatri, Shaik Farid, Varind Ismail, Joosub Abdool Carim, Ismail Kadir, Easop Kadua, Mahomed Esak, Mahomed Hafejee, Osman Ahmed and Mahomed Tayub, were in the Executive committee, who set out to implement the programmes of the Natal Indian Congress.



MAHATHMA GANDHI  
WITH LEADERS OF THE NATAL INDIAN CONGRESS, 1894

### **INTENTION TO DO PUBLIC WORK**

Adverting to this context, Gandhiji in his autobiography wrote ‘It was here that I had opportunities of learning public work and acquired some measure of my capacity for it’. Gandhiji, during his 21 years of stay in South Africa, got complete cooperation from several persons mainly Haji Esa Samad, Abdul Gani, Mohammed Khasim. Kamaruddin, Adamji Mia Khan and Dawood Seth for the struggle he led there.

Besides extending material and moral support to Sathyagraha Movement and phoenix settlement, Dada Abdullah made successful efforts to make his business partners also to do so. Mentioning this in his article ‘Dada Abdullah and Mahatma Gandhi’ Prof. Yodendra Yadav wrote, ‘So we can say that Dada Abdulla was the first supporter of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa Satyagraha Movement. He taught and supported him like his father.’

### **‘IMAM SAHEB’ TO INDIA ALONG WITH GANHDIJI**

After his transformation from Barrister Gandhi into the leader of Sathyagraha Movement in South Africa and achieving certain tangible results

in favour of Indians there, Gandhiji left for India in 1915 leaving the Ashram and other activities to his associates there in 1914. Along with Gandhiji came Imam Abdul Khadir Bavajir (-1931), an associate in Phoenix Ashram. He assumed charge of the printing press in Sabarmathi Ashram started in India by Gandhiji. Abdul Khadir's wife Imam Saheba, his daughters Fathima Begum and Amana Khureshi (1905-1967) also worked in the printing press. Imam Abdul Khadir, whom Gandhiji fondly called 'Imam Saab' and treated affectionately as his brother, and his family lived in Sabarmathi Ashram with Gandhiji's family.

### **FATHIMA'S WEDDING INVITATION BY GANDHIJI**

Gandhiji took special care in the matter of 20 years old Fathima's marriage because of the affection he had for the family. The wedding invitation printed in the name of Gandhiji dated 2 April 1920 had a special place in the history of the literature of Indian National Movement. The Invitation reads like this,

**'Dear friend, Fathima Begum is the elder daughter of my friend and brother Imam Abdul Khadir Saheb who was with me in ashram and jail life in South Africa and India. Fathima Bibi's marriage with Syed Hussain Miya is fixed for 26 April, 1920 Saturday at 7 Pm. You are invited to grace the happy occasion and shower the bride and bridegroom with best wishes.**

**Yours**

**Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi'**

Gandhiji specially mentioned about this marriage at length in his paper 'Navajeevan'. Gandhiji wrote about Imam Abdul Khadir and his family in detail. All this is available in the 'Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Government of India Publications'. Gandhiji wrote about Imam Saheb's life in South Africa and in India at Sabarmathi Ashram in the following way : 'His real name was Abdul Kadir Bawazeer, but, as he served as Imam in South Africa, most people knew him as Imam Saheb. I always addressed him by that name. The Imam Saheb's father was the Muezzin of the famous Jumma Masjid in Bombay and served in that capacity right till his death. He died only a few years ago, after the Imam Saheb's return to India. He fell dead just as he was washing and getting ready for the azan. Such a death

comes only to the blessed. The Imam Saheb's forefathers were Arabs and had come to India and settled in the Konkan years ago. Hence he knew the Konkani language too. His mother tongue was Gujarati, but he had little schooling. He knew Arabic well enough to be able to read from the Koran Sharif with a pleasing intonation, though not so well as to be able to understand everything in the Koran. He had picked up, through contacts in practical life, English, Dutch and Creole French. Urdu, of course, he knew. He had also a working knowledge of Zulu. His intellect was so sharp that, if he had regularly studied in a school, he would have earned reputation as a great scholar. Though he was not a lawyer, he had come to understand subtleties of law through practical experience.

The Imam Saheb had gone to South Africa for trade and had earned much. When he gave up business, he kept coaches which he supplied on hire and had a fairly good income from that calling. Being a man of independent temper, he never tried his fortune in big business. He had a sweet voice, and, since his father was a Muezzin, he occasionally officiated as Imam in the mosque in Johannesburg. But he accepted no honorarium for his services.

The Imam Saheb had married twice. Both the wives were Malays. His first marriage was not successful, and so he married the lady whom we knew as his wife. This marriage had given him much happiness. He and the Haji Saheba served each other with great devotion. He was a sincere friend. So far as I know, the Imam Saheb's views about marriage had undergone a complete change and he had come to believe in monogamy.

My first meeting with Imam Saheb may be said to have taken place in 1903 in South Africa after my return to that country. He used to tell me that we had met once before that but I have no recollection of that meeting. When I set up practice as a lawyer in Johannesburg, he used to accompany clients to my office. He was an altogether different man then in appearance and manners. He used to dress himself in English style, and wore a Turkish cap. I immediately recognized his intelligence, but otherwise he did not produce a good impression on me at first. I thought him rather obstinate, but, as I came to know him better, I liked him more and more.

I saw, as I had more and more experience of dealing with him, that what I had thought to be obstinacy was only his eagerness to understand





IMAM SAHEB ABUDL QADIR  
BAWAZIR (-1931)

fully the implications of every point. If he held an opinion on any matter, he would not give it up till his reason was convinced of his error. He would not take a lawyer's word as gospel truth in legal matters merely because he himself was not a lawyer, but would argue against him even in such matters. Though he had had no education, he had complete confidence in his judgment. Moreover, he had a proud sense of self-respect. I, therefore, saw very soon that he had sufficient strength of mind to cling to his own view without being overawed by anybody.

In the beginning, Imam Saheb used to come to me on behalf of clients and explain their cases to me. But he took interest in current affairs and would draw me into discussion about them. He evinced keen interest in discussing the hardships of our countrymen in South Africa and took part in the meetings, etc. On most issues, he supported me, but he never hesitated to oppose me even in public whenever he did not approve of my stand. Gradually, however, he was drawn towards me and, when the Satyagraha commenced, proved himself as steadfast as a rock. Some fell and some weakened, and some opposed me bitterly, but I don't remember Imam Saheb to have wavered at any time. When he was imprisoned for the first time, nobody expected that he would remain strong till the end.

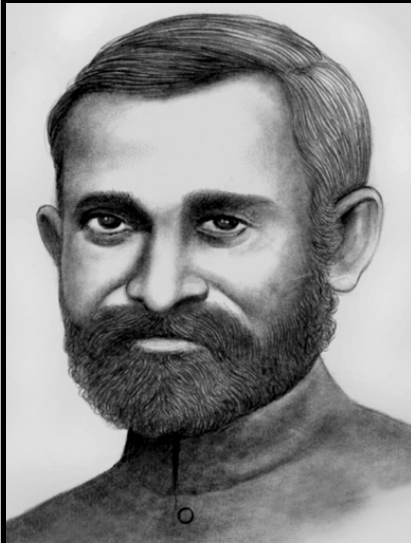
On the contrary, many persons told me, including some who held him in high respect, that he would not go to jail again, that he had a delicate constitution, was pleasure-loving and had many wants. This was on the whole true. However, Imam Saheb never weakened, whereas I saw many who were known to be simple in their habits withdrawing from the struggle. Imam Saheb's capacity for self-sacrifice was very great, and, though he

would think long before taking a decision, he showed wonderful strength in clinging to a decision once taken.

When Imam Saheb plunged into the struggle, he had no thought at all that he would have to break up his home and embrace a life of complete renunciation. As soon, however, as he saw that if he wished to remain staunch in the Satyagraha movement he would have to give up the attachment to his home, he did so almost in an instant. This was no small sacrifice on his part.

We should remember that Imam Saheb had set up his home in English style. Haji Saheba had lived in that style from her very birth. Fatima and Amana also were brought up like English children. For one who had lived in this manner, it was extremely difficult to curtail his heavy expenditure and adopt an utterly simple mode of life. For Imam Saheb, however, once he had made up his mind to do a particular thing, it was quite easy to carry out his resolve. And, therefore, when I decided to leave Johannesburg and to settle in Phoenix, he himself proposed that he, too, would live there. Though I knew his firmness of mind, I was completely at a loss what to say in reply to his proposal. I described to him the hardships of life in Phoenix. A man who had never put his body to the slightest trouble and had always lived surrounded by comforts and luxuries; I wondered how such a person would be able to start forthwith living like a laborer. Even if he himself could bear the hardships of life in Phoenix, what about Haji Saheba, and Fatima and Amana, I asked. Imam Saheb's reply was brief.

He said: "I have put my trust in God. And you do not know Haji Saheba. She will always be ready to live where I live, and as I live. If, therefore, you have no other difficulty in the matter, I have decided to come and live in Phoenix. No one knows when the struggle will end. I don't think I shall be able to carry on my old business of supplying coaches on hire, or take up any other occupation. Like you, I too have realized that a Satyagrahi should give up love of wealth and possessions." Imam Saheb's proposal pleased me very much. I wrote to my co-workers in Phoenix. They also welcomed the proposal. And so Imam Saheb and his family came over. Many inmates of Ashram probably do not know that Imam Saheb joined the residents of Phoenix in all their activities. Everybody fetched water for his or her own use from a spring below. It flowed at



MOULANA MAZHARUL HAQ  
(1866-1930)

some depth below the level of the Phoenix Settlement. The Phoenix buildings were on a hill and one had to climb about fifty feet to reach the place. Imam Saheb had a delicate constitution even at that time, but every morning one saw him walking down to the spring with a KAVADA on his shoulders and climbing up slowly with the buckets filled with water. The place now occupied by the spinning-wheel in the Ashram was held in Phoenix by the printing press. All the inmates, boys and girls, old men and women, educated and uneducated, had to work in some department of the press. There were all kinds of big or small tasks,

composing, folding the printed copies of the paper, making wrappers, pasting stamps, moving the wheel with the hand whenever the machine stopped, etc., etc. Everybody was required to give some time and help in these tasks, especially on the day on which the journal was to be published. Imam Saheb, Haji Saheba, Fatima and Amana, all four of them joined in this work. Imam Saheb had learned composing. For a man of his temper and habits and of his age, this was indeed wonderful. In this way, Imam Saheb identified himself completely with the life at Phoenix. He and the other members of his family were non-vegetarian, but I don't remember any time when they cooked such food at Phoenix.

This, however, does not mean that Imam Saheb was in any way a less devout Muslim. He never missed Namaz, nor did he or his family ever fail to observe the Roza. By adopting the manner of life of the other inmates and making a sacrifice for their sake, he really demonstrated the nobility of Islamic culture. Imam Saheb's capacity for self-sacrifice was to be put to a still more severe test. He went to jail again several times, and proved himself a model prisoner.

When, however, in the year 1914 it was decided that most of the inmates of the Ashram should return to India, leaving only a few of them in Phoenix, Imam Saheb was put to a real test. South Africa had practically become his home. Haji Saheba, Fatima and Amana were complete strangers to India and did not know any Indian language - a little English and Dutch was all the language that they knew. But Imam Saheb took no time to come to a decision. He had made up his mind that he and his family would live wherever I did. That was his self- sacrifice for the cause of Satyagraha and his contribution towards Hindu-Muslim unity. Everyone in Sabarmathi Ashram knew his daily routine. Being a man with a deep faith in Allah, his heart was pure. His commitment to rules and regulations of Ashram kept growing stronger.'

Having written about the family of Imam Abdul Khadir Bavazir, Gandhiji went on to praise the workflow and courage of Fathima and Amana. Praising the courage and adventurous spirit of Fatima Begum and Amana Khureshi who participated in the Indian National Movement, Gandhiji remarked, 'How else would the girls brought up and trained in phoenix and Sabarmathi Ashrams behave? '.

### INVITATION TO CHAMPARAN

When Gandhiji, who fought against apartheid in South Africa with the weapon of Sathyagraha and achieved remarkable success, returned to India in 1915 and the first weapon he used against the British was the weapon of Sathyagraha. The First campaign he waged after returning to India was the well known 'Champaran Farmers Struggle of 1917'. Farmers leader Mr. Shaik Gulab (1857-1920), and Journalist Mr. Peer Muhammad Ansari Munees (1882-1949) laid strong foundations to 'Champaran Farmers Struggle' with thereby the decade long campaign against the British owners of Indigo plantations and factories and the English officers, who supported them before Gandhiji's arrival to Champaran of Bihar State.

Mr Peer Munees not only prepared the representation inviting Gandhiji to Champaran but also accompanied Mr. Raj Kumar Shukla (1875-1929) to Indian National Congress sessions held in Lucknow to hand it over to Mr. M K Gandhi. He explained in the representation the miserable



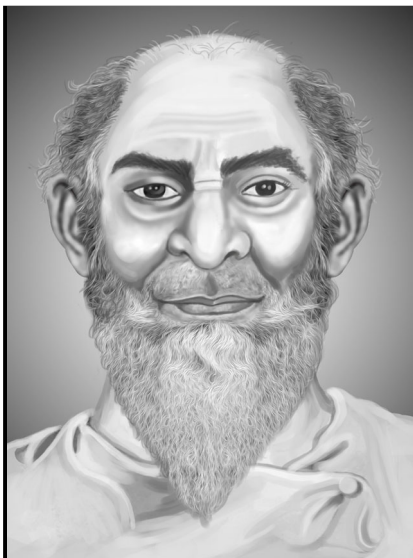
conditions being faced by Champaran farmers. This representation moved Gandhiji's heart and made him visit Champaran.

It was on this occasion that Gandhiji had a taste of the severity of caste discrimination in India. On his way to Champaran he reached Patna where Mr Shukla took him to the house of lawyer Mr. Babu Rajendra Prasad. Mr Rajendra Prasad was not in the home at that time. His domestic servants did not allow Gandhi into the house beyond varandah due to caste related sanctions followed by the family. The servants did not allow them even to use the toilet in the house. They further objected while they were drawing water from the well. Gandhiji mentioned all this in his autobiography. In a letter written to his son Mr Maganlal Gandhi he remarked, 'They treated us as beggars'

In that embarrassing situation Gandhiji remembered that his London classmate Barrister Moulana Mazaharul Haq (1866-1930) was a resident of Patna. Gandhiji sent a word to him explaining their situation. Mr Haq understood the problem and made necessary arrangements for Gandhiji to reach Muzafarpur. Later on Moulana Mazahrul Haq not only participated

actively in Sathyagraha Movement but also dedicated his life for Indian Freedom Movement leading ashram life in a gandhian way renouncing his luxurious life.

Mahathma Gandhi and Raj Kumar Shukla reached Champaran via Muzafarpur. Gandhi detailed about Champaran Sathyagraha Movement in his autobiography under the caption ‘The Stain of Indigo’ and other captions. As Gandhiji got into action from the very next day after reaching Champaran, farmers in large numbers approached him and started giving him detailed accounts of the cruel deeds unleashed on them by the



**BATHAQ MIYA ANSARI**  
**(1869-1957)**

British owners of Indigo factories. Gandhiji and his team of lawyers started recording the painful stories of Champaran farmers and the horrible episodes of exploitation by the British Indigo planters. Irwin, who was one of the British owners of Indigo factories, feared that the modus operandi of Gandhiji would have an adverse impact on their prospects, tried to obstruct Gandhiji’s activities and even plotted to end his life.

### **SAVIOUR OF GANDHIJI’S LIFE**

Irwin chose Bataq Miya Ansari (1869-1957), his cook, to execute his plot. Irwin told his cook Mr. Ansari that he was inviting Gandhiji and his colleagues for dinner and instructed him to mix poison in the food to be served to the guest. He offered a handsome reward for obedience and threatened that disobedience would attract severe punishment. Unwilling to resort to the evil deed, Ansari revealed the English man’s plot when Gandhiji and Babu Rajendra Prasad came to Irwin’s house for dinner. Consequently Gandhiji survived the attempt on his life in 1917.

The courageous deed of Mr Bataq Miya Ansari came to be known to the world only when the first president of India Dr. Babu Rajendra Prasad

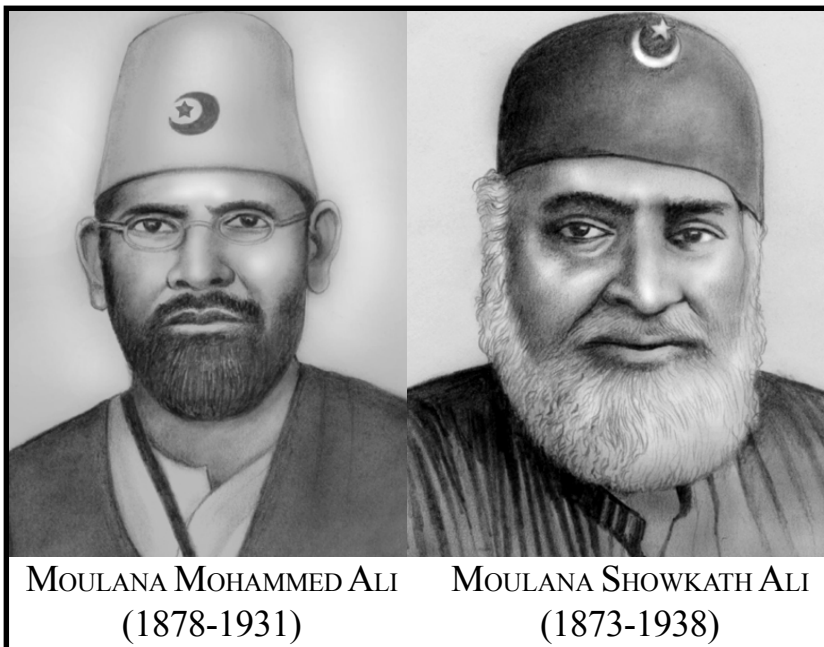
revealed it in 1950. Besides revealing the most important episode in the history of Indian Freedom Struggle, Dr Rajendra Prasad enquired about the financial situation of Ansari's family and ordered the then District collector to allot certain area of land to the family. The orders issued publicly by the first president of India have been implemented only partially till today.

Status Quo is prevailing in the matter of the implementation of the presidential orders even after the issue made headlines in news papers and in spite of the subsequent recommendation of the former President Mrs. Parthibha Patil. But for Ansari's courageous act of exposing the plot to end Gandhiji's life, the fate of the freedom and independence we are enjoying now after driving away the colonial rulers and the turns the history of Indian freedom Struggle would have taken otherwise are unimaginable.

### **SUPPORT OF ALI BROTHERS**

After leading Champaran Farmers Movement successfully in 1917, Gandhiji directly entered Indian National Movement. He got abundant support from the families of Moulana Shoukath Ali (1873-1938), Moulana Mohammed Ali Jouhar (1878-1931) who were popularly known as 'Ali Brothers' in the history of Indian Freedom Struggle. If Ali brothers were the oxygen to the twin movements of Khilafat and Non-Cooperation, Gandhiji was a guide to it. Ali brothers were with Gandhiji during his tours in these movements. Gandhiji was so much mingled with Ali brothers that he declared that he was the third son of the mother of Ali brothers, Mrs. Abadi Bano Begum. He was highly respectful towards her. Gandhiji's letters to his associates, Ali brothers and to Abadi Bano herself, and special essays published in his Journals such as Yong India bear witness to the highest respect Gandhiji had for Mrs. Abadi Bano Begum.

Mrs. Abadi Bano Begum toured extensively to raise funds for the financial strength and spread of Khilafath and Non-Cooperation movements. Gandhiji requested her to make a large number of women participate in Khilafath – Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements. Responding to Gandhiji's request, Abadi Bano worked actively. Mahatma Gandhi declared that the activists of Indian National Movement should take guidance from her in the event of Ali brothers and himself being arrested by the British government.



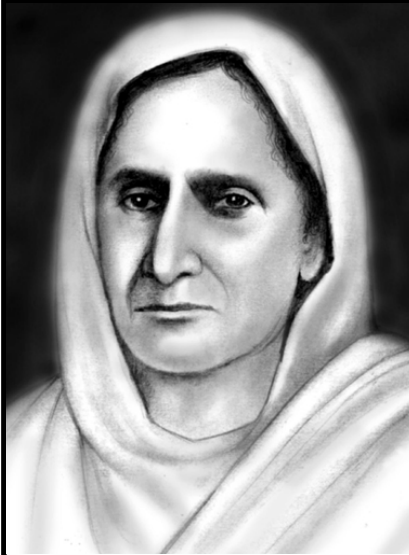
When Mrs Abadi Bano Begum passed away in 1934, Gandhiji was by her bedside along with Ali brothers. He said that it was his fortune to be with the mother when she was breathing her last. In his letters and journals Gandhiji remarked that the efforts she made for the cause of Independence, Hindu-Muslim unity and for attracting women into Indian National Movement are inestimable.

### **COURAGEOUS WOMEN**

Mrs. Amzadi Bano Begum, daughter in law of Mrs Abadi Bano Begum and wife of Moulana Mohammed Ali, played an active role in the Indian National Movement along with her mother-in-law. Gandhiji praised her attitude and work flow in his letter to his associates and followers and in the journals published under his editorship.

Amjadi Bano was with Gandhi and Moulana Mohammed Ali when they were on a tour to Madras in September 1921. On the way they were to speak in a public meeting in Waltair. No sooner had the two leaders' alighted from the trains than they were arrested by British police officers. Gandhiji recorded the fearlessness displayed by Ali and Amjadi Begum in





ABADI BANO BEGUM  
(1852-1924)

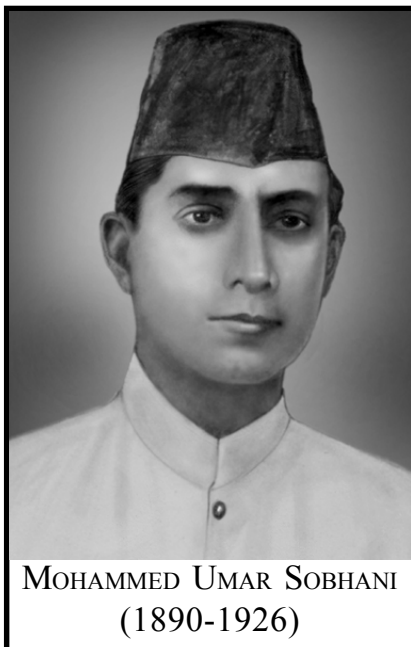


AMZAADI BANO BEGUM  
(1885-1947)

the form of an essay written from the railway compartment itself. Gandhiji remarked in that essay that he was proud of working with Ali. Gandhiji praised the courage exhibited by Mrs. Amjadi Bano Begum at the time of her husband's arrest and the way she spoke in the public meeting after that. (Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Ministry of Information, Govt. of India, Volume XX1, Page 176)

Gandhiji wrote a special article in 'Young India' dated 29 November 1921 under the caption 'A Courageous Woman' explaining Amjadi Bano Begum's role in the Indian National Movement, her boldness, fearlessness, workflow and her style of functioning. Referring to Moulana Mohammad Ali in the lengthy article he described her as 'the courageous wife of a courageous husband'. Describing the women folk of Abadi bano Begum's family who were active in the Indian National Movement, a British office named Malcum Halley remarked in the legislative assembly of the day, 'Women of this family too procure funds and resort to sedition'. Finally he declared all the members of family as 'dangerous Persons'.

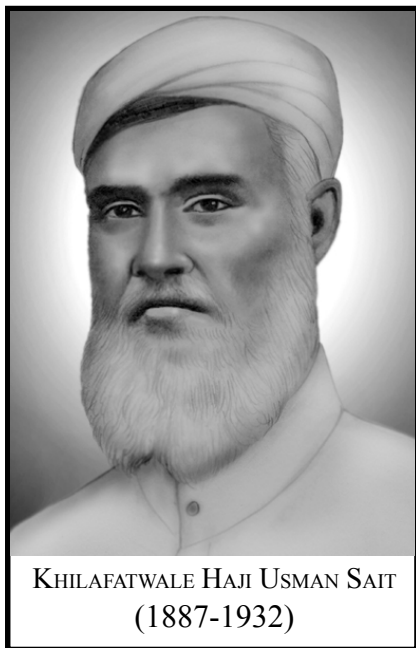
During the Khilafath and Non Cooperation Movements several renowned persons came into contact with Gandhiji. All the leaders who made a mark of their own on the political map of India became close associates of Gandhiji. These leaders were ready to give away everything they had for the cause of Indian National Movement. Mr. Mohammed Umer Sobhani (1890-1926) of Bombay and Mr. Khilafathwale Haji Usman Seth (1887-1932) were two such business leaders who became famous with their distinct generosity. These two wealthy Business leaders joined Indian National Movement through ‘Khilafath-Non Cooperation Movements’.



MOHAMMED UMAR SOBHANI  
(1890-1926)

### STAGE MANAGER

Mr. Umer Sobhani used to bear a major share of the expenditure incurred on any programme conducted in Bombay in connection with Indian National Movement. Besides extending financial support to the Indian National Movement he was well-known for his organizing skills. On account of that Gandhiji praised him as ‘Stage Manager’. Mr. Umer Sobhani was so generous that he gave a blank cheque to Gandhiji and asked him to write the amount needed on the cheque, when Gandhiji was collecting donations for ‘Tilak Swarajya Nidhi’ in 1921. Umer Sobhani’s will, determination and commitment to support the Indian National Movement financially was revealed best by the condolence message released by Gandhiji on the sudden death of Mr. Umer Sobhani which reads ‘If he could not be the first on the list of subscriptions then he thought it was better for him to retire from public life’.



KHILAFATWALE HAJI USMAN SAIT  
(1887-1932)

## **CASH BAG OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**

Mr. Haji Usman Seth, popularly known as Khilafathwale, was an affluent businessman dealing in foreign goods in Bangalore of Karnataka state. He Joined Indian National Movement on the request of Gandhiji and Ali brothers. He burned down foreign goods worth lakhs of rupees as part of Swadeshi Movement. He came to be called the ‘Cash Bag of Indian National Congress’ as he used to respond generously to the requests of Gandhiji and Ali brothers for financial support to the organization. His business suffered huge losses

because of the anger of British government. Unmindful of the losses he continued his financial support to Indian National Congress by disposing of several of his Bungalows and other properties whenever Gandhiji, Panditha Nehru and Ali brothers requested him for support. He gave them gold, blank cheques and cash whenever there was a need. Even when all his properties melted away in that process, he procured money by auctioning his son and donated the proceeds to Indian National Congress and kept his name as the Cash Bag of Indian National Congress. That shows how great the spirit of sacrifice of Haji Usman Seth was.

## **ANSARI DHAMASALA:**

When Delhi became the head quarters of Indian National Movement the house of its famous leader Dr. Mukthar Ahamed Ansari (1880-1936) with a spacious premises Dar-Us-Salam in Delhi became the centre of all its activity. Whenever there was any programme, however big it may be in Delhi, Dr Ansari used to shoulder the responsibility of organizing that programme and taking care of lodging and board facilities for every activist and leader coming to participate in the programme from all over India.

While Dr Ansari was deeply involving himself in organizing political programmes, his wife Begum Shamshunnisa Ansari used to supervise the arrangements of lodging and boarding facilities to make sure that no inconvenience was caused to anybody. Having seen from close quarters the Ansari couple's sprit of sacrifice, workflow and commitment, Gandhiji wrote an article in 'Navajeevan' dated 29 March 1931 with the title 'Ansari Dharmasala'.

In the article Gandhiji praised the warm hospitality at Dr. Ansari's house and the meticulous care Begum Shamshunnisa Ansari

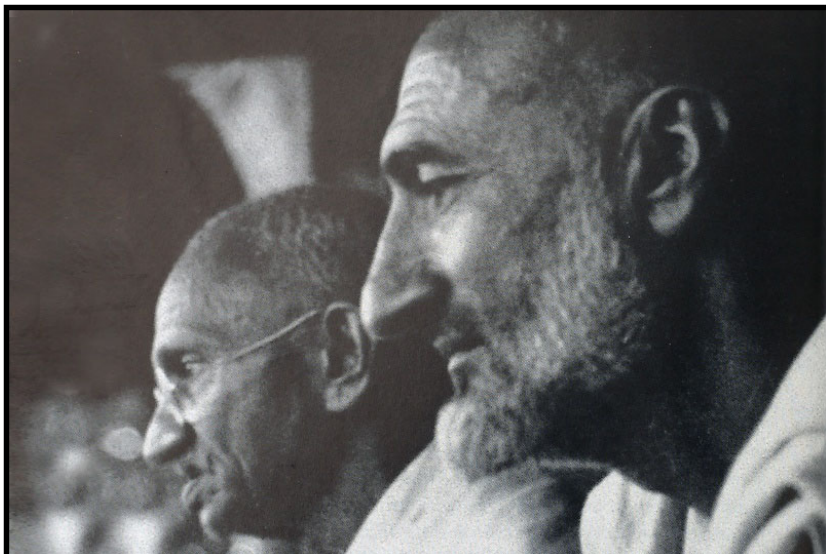


DR. MUQTAR AHAMED ANSARI  
(1880-1936)

took about her guests. He also praised her progressive ideas besides her kindness, tolerance and workflow. At the end of the article he remarked 'I bowed my head in a sense of faith in the presence of Ansari Begum'. Whenever Gandhiji visited Delhi, he used to stay at Dr Ansari's house. It is known through Mrs. Halide Edib's writings that Gandhiji used to discuss national issues with Begum Shamshunnisa Ansari besides family matters. Gandhiji had the highest respect for the great woman and his remark 'Whatever Dr Ansari achieved was only because of Begum Shamshunnisa's cooperation' was the praise she received from Gandhiji.

### THREE GANDHIS

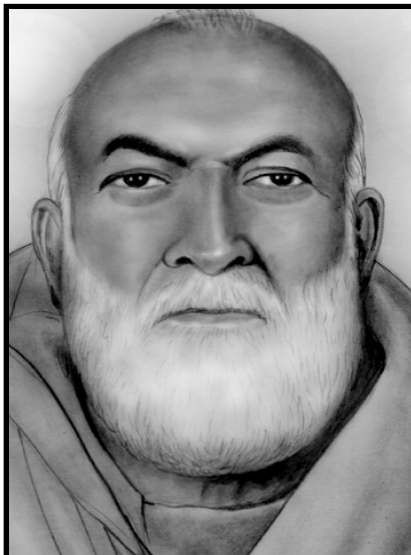
There are three Gandhians, as far as I Know, who became well-known with 'Gandhi' as a part of their names. Mr Khan Abdul Gafar Khan (1890-1988) popularly known as 'Frontier Gandhi' was the most famous of the three. The second leader was 'Baluchi Gandhi' in Pakistan whose name was Mr. Abdus Samad Khan (1907-1983). Mr. Fareedul Jama (1907-1973) of Vishaka- patnam, Andhrapradesh, who became famous as 'Vishaka Gandhi' was the third. Mr. Khan Abdus Samad Khan , who was attracted



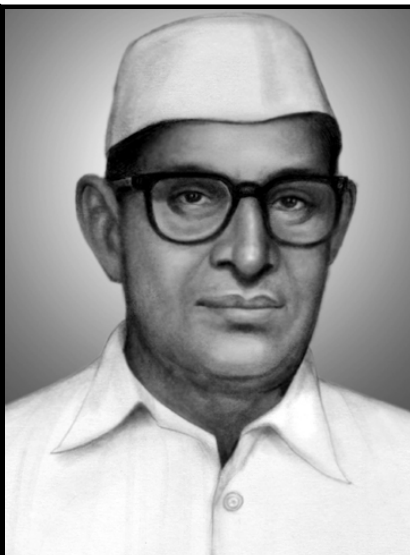
MAHATMA GANDHI  
(1869-1948)

SARIHAD GANDHI  
(1890-1988)

towards Gandhiji's idea of non violence in 1920, led his life in gandhian way till the end and was assassinated just like Gandhiji. Mr. Fareedul Jama took part in Indian National Movement with nonviolence as his weapon. He was kept in the same jail where Mahathma Gandhi was imprisoned. Later on he worked in library movement in gandhian way. As he spent all his wealth for building libraries, the residents of Vishakapatanam fondly called him 'Vishaka Gandhi'. Mr.Khan Abdul Gafar Khan, well-known as 'Frontier Gandhi' in the history of Indian Freedom Struggle, resented the hegemony of colonial rulers' right from his childhood. He entered into Indian National Movement in 1919. He saw Mahathma Gandhi for the first time in 1928. Mr. Khan Abdul Gafar Khan, a Patan leader for whom weapon is like an indispensable ornament and who hesitates not even a second to lay down his life for the sake of a friend or to take away the life of an enemy, was attracted towards Gandhiji's idea of non violence. He practised Gandhiji's non violence in toto and founded an organisation called 'Khuda-e-Khidmatgar' (Servants of God) to bring about awareness among his people in the direction of their welfare and development and to lead a



KHAN ABDUL SAMAD KHAN  
(1907-1973)



FHAREEDULA JAMA  
(1907-1983)

nonviolent struggle against the British colonial rulers. Through his efforts the servants of God internalized the concept of non violence. When the British police opened fire on the people and servants of God who were holding a demonstration in Khissakhani Bazar in Peshawar on 23 April 1930 during Civil Disobedience Movement, the servants of God did not throw even a small piece of stone. Moreover they went forward in batches and sacrificed their lives. Even when Khissakhani Bazar was turning into a heap of dead bodies, they did not deviate from the path of nonviolence.

The unique role played by the activists of Khuda-e-Khidmatgar in the Indian Freedom Struggle under the leadership of 'Frontier Gandhi' was hailed not only by Pathans but by the whole world. When Gandhiji toured the northwest region on the request Mr. Gafar Khan he studied the programmes of Khuda-e-Khimadgar and remarked 'It is enough to have a thousand persons like the workers of Khuda-e-Khamadgar to drive away the social malady called slavery beyond the frontiers of our country'. In this background, Khan Abdul Gafar Khan once said to Gandhiji, 'Mahatmaji, violent incidents happened in several places during this movement, but



JUSTICE ABBAS TAYABJI (1854-1936) AND MAHATHMA GANDHI

why didn't Pathans resort to any violence?'. In response to this question Gandhiji said 'On several occasions I said that only courageous people get quickly into the way of non violence. Pathans' giving up violence is not their weakness. It is because of their strength that they were able to give up violence. That is why they demonstrated to the world how the nonviolent way of courageous people looked like'. Thus Gandhiji praised the nonviolence of Pathans. (Bharatha Swathnstrodyamam : Muslim Poraataalu, Syed Naseer Ahamed, Azad House of Publications, 2003, Pages 160,161)

### **GUJARATHI DIAMOND**

Tayyabji family members of Bombay had inalienable ties with Indian National Congress since its inception. Justice Abbas Tayyabji (1854-1936) of Tayyabji family happened to have direct contact with Mahathma Gandhi since 1915 and that contact was a turning point in his life. He decided to participate actively in Indian National Movement in accordance with the suggestions made by Gandhiji. 'Gujarath Rajkeeya Parishad' under the leadership of Justice Abbas Tayyabji launched Non Cooperation Movement in 1919 before congress started it. He gave up all luxuries with the inspiration

from Mahathma Gandhi and became a part of Swadeshi movement. He travelled in a bullock cart from village to village in Gujarat selling 'liberty cloth' at the age of eighty years to promote Khadi. He took up several responsibilities during Bardoli Sathyagraha programme in 1928. When Gandhiji was arrested on the eve of Dandi March, which ran from 12 March, 1930 to 6 April 1930, Mr. Abbas took up the reins of Dandi Sathyagraha Movement as per the anticipatory instructions of Gandhiji. Then the British police arrested Mr. Abbas and sent him to jail. Even in the ripe old age he went ahead on Gandhian path with undaunted



BEGUM AMEENA TYABJI  
(1866-1942)

courage and with freedom struggle as his breath unmindful of his ill health and was lauded by Gandhiji as 'Gujarati Diamond'. (Encyclopedia of Muslim Biography, Edited by Nagendra K.R.Singh, APH Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2001, Page. 377)

### THREE GENERATIONS OF TAYYABJI'S ON GANDHIAN PATH

Since Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 till the attainment of Independence in 1947, three generations of men and women belonging to the educated and wealthy Tayyabji family of Bombay played a significant role in Indian Freedom Struggle. The members of Tayyabji family used to discuss their personal issues with Gandhiji. That way women of Tayyabji family followed Gandhian path in full measure along with their men folk.

Participation of women from Tayyabji family in Indian National Movement started with Ameena Tayyabji (1866-1942). She organised programmes of Indian National Movement on the invitation of Gandhiji. Gandhiji noticed the perseverance in Ameena and the respect Gujarati women had for her. In a letter to Ameena's daughter Rehana Tayyabji dated 11





**BEGUM REHANA ABBAS TYABJI**  
**(1900-1975)**

April 1930 he wrote, ‘I am convening a meeting of Gujarat Women to discuss issues such as prohibition of liquor and boycott of foreign goods. You and your mother must attend the meeting’. Honoring the special invitation of Gandhiji, Ameena attended the meeting. In that meeting Ameena Tayabji was elected president of Gujarat Mahila Congress in the presence of Gandhiji.

Noticing Ameena’s efforts and workflow, Gandhiji wrote praisingly about her in his ‘Young India’ and ‘Navajeevan’; By passing an apt resolution Gujarath women took up a great responsibility. On behalf of

all women Ameena Tayyabji and her committee bore that burden’. Ameena’s importance in national level politics was revealed when Gandhiji wanted her to be a signatory, besides 24 other women, to a letter being sent to the Viceroy on behalf of women’s conference during Indian National Movement.

Mrs. Hameeda Tayyabji (-1911-) participated in all programmes of Indian National Movement in gandhian path. She organised the programmes with courage and audacity as per Gandhiji’s suggestions. In a letter written to Rehana Tayyabji on 24 April, 1932, Gandhiji praised Hameeda’s organizing abilities, courage and audacity. He wrote ‘Hameeda is a courageous person. May god bless her with a long life?’

### **GANDHIJI’S USTADI SAHEBA REHANA**

Begum Rehana Tayyabji (1900-1975) was Urdu ustadi of Gandhiji. She taught Urdu to Gandhiji. Rehana’s father Abbas Tayyabji, and her mother Ameena Tayyabji participated in several prgrammes organised under the leadership of Gandhiji. Right from her childhood Rehana had direct contact with Indian National Movement and its leadership especially Mahatma



BEGUM SAKINA LUKMANI  
(1865-1960)



BEGUM KHURSHID KHAWAJA  
(1896-1981)

Gandhi. Gandhiji had fatherly affection for Rehana and in several letters he wrote to her on various occasions he addressed her as ‘Priya Puthri, Chiranjeevi, Rehana Beti, Beti Rehana, Ustadbi Saheba and Rehana and Bholi Rehana’.

During her stay in Mahathma’s Sevagram Ashram, Rehena taught Urdu to Gandhiji. Even after that she wrote to him frequently and showed a lot of interest in teaching him Urdu. Gandhiji used to say that he was delighted to receive letters from her. In a letter written to Rehana, Gandhiji remarked, ‘I feel anxious if I do not receive your letter’. Rehana was a good poetess. She wrote several prayer songs and sang them. Gandhiji was so much impressed by her songs that in one of his letters to her he wrote, ‘I do not feel good, unless I listen to your prayer songs. You please come and sing for me’.

#### **‘ESTEEMD WIFE’ KHURSHID KHAWAZA:**

Begum Khurshid Khawaza (1896-1981) was a bold woman who wrote a letter to Gandhiji expressing her worry about her husband not



నౌఖాళిలో మతకలహాలు రగిలినప్పుడు శాంతి-సామరస్య స్థాపనకు బేగం అమతుస్సలాం 20 రోజులపాటు సత్యాగ్రహదీక్ష పూనిన సందర్భంగా ఆమెకు పండ్లరసం అందించి సత్యాగ్రహ విరమణగావిస్తున్న గాంధీ.

being arrested during Indian National Movement. She wrote, ‘All the associates of my husband have gone to jail. I am very sad that my husband is free till today’. Respecting her feelings, Gandhiji expressed the optimism like this: ‘Feelings of really committed people are like this only. We will surely get independence on the day when all the men and women come forward willingly like this to fill the jails for independence’ (Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Govt. of India Publications, New Delhi) Explaining the great sacrifices her husband Khwaza Abdul Mazeed (1896-1961) made in Indian National Movement, Gandhiji wrote an article titled ‘Great Esteemed wife’. In that article Gandhiji specially mentioned how her family gave up luxuries and adopted the life style of an ordinary worker and how strong her determination and commitment toward the aims of Indian National Movement was. Gandhiji expressed his happiness in an article in which he mentioned a letter written by Begum Khurshid in which she wrote, ‘You must have felt happy when you know that the Government had arrested my husband’.

Another woman from the well-known Tayyabji family, Sakina Lukmani is the daughter of Justice Badruddin Tayyabji. She actively participated in the programmes of Indian National Movement even at a very ripe old age because of Gandhiji's special request. When the British Government in Gujarat arrested her, the whole Gujarat rose in resentment. Gandhiji praised the courage of Sakina Lukmani when he said, 'Tayyabji family members exhibited extraordinary courage and audacity'.

**DEAR DAUGHTER  
AMUTUSSALAM**

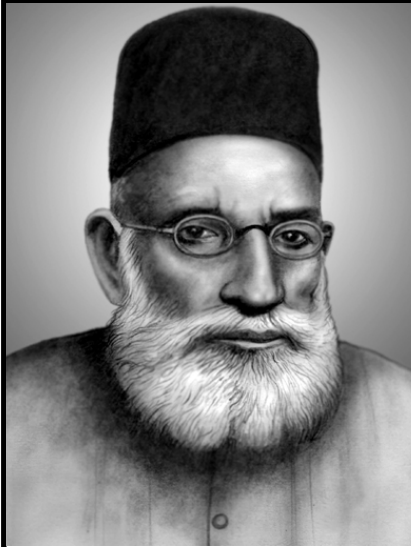
Bibi Amutusslam (1807-1985) who was considered as 'dear daughter' by Gandhiji becomes his heir to the theory and practice of Non violence. She joined Sevagram Ashram in 1931 and followed completely the stipulated rules and regulations of the Ashram and discharged her responsibilities with dedication. As a close assistant of Gandhiji, she participated in various experiments he conducted. She accompanied Gandhiji in his country wide tours and served him.

There is Amutussalam's role in Mohammed Ali Jinnah's becoming well known as 'Qaid-I-Ajam' (Great Leader). Once when Gandhiji, while writing a letter to Jinnah, was not certain as to how he should address him, Amutussalam suggested to him that 'Qaid-I-Ajam' could be apt for Jinnah. Gandhiji took her suggestion and addressed Jinnah as 'Qaid-I-Ajam'. With this phrase Jinnah's personal prestige grew unimaginably. Moulana Abdul Kalam Azad in his book 'Indian wins Freedom' at page 96-97 commented that the phrase subsequently caused huge change in Indian Politics.

When communal violence flared up in North-west frontier, Sindh and Nukhali regions, Gandhiji sent Amutussalam there to restore peace and harmony. Writing a letter to his friend Mr Anand Hingloy on that occasion



**BEGUM ZOHARA ANSARI  
(-1988)**



**MOULANA HASRATH MOHANI**  
(1878-1951)

on 6 November 1940, Gandhiji remarked, 'She comes there to stop the communal violence in Sindh. She can lay down her life to stop the violence'. She Undertook Sathyagraha there for 20 days and proved that she was Gandhiji's true heir.

### **ULTIMATE SACRIFICE**

Begum Johara Ansari (-1988) was the daughter of Dr Mukhtar Ahamed Ansari and Begum Shamshunnisa Ansari who were praised by Gandhiji as 'the Wealthy by Sacrifice'. She made more sacrifices than her parents and received blessings from Gandhiji. She spent a long time with Gandhiji

in the Ashram. At that time she becomes his Urdu teacher. She spent all her inherited properties for the sake of Indian National Movement and lived in a rented house in the last phase of her life.

### **URDU IS NOT A MUSLIM'S LANGUAGE**

Begum Sultana Hayath Ansari was an activist in Indian National Movement after respect for Gandhiji did not stand in her way to express her disagreement with his ideas without any inhibition or hesitation. She lived close to Mahathma Gandhi in Sevagram Ashram translating his letters and books into Urdu.

Then there was a discussion in newspapers over the proposal to follow individual sathyagraha not as a rule but as a moral. Referring to that discussion Begum Sultana Hayat wrote a letter to Gandhiji. In that letter she brought that proposal to his notice and questioned him 'if it was not contradictory to Gandhian way of life to consider individual sathyagraha as a moral instead of as a rule' In response to that question Gandhiji wrote a letter to Sultana Hayath on 27 January 1942 in which he remarked 'your opinion on this issue is correct'.



GANDHIJI AND MOULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD (1888-1958)

Once a news item appeared in newspapers reporting that Gandhiji had said that ‘Urdu was the language of Muslims’. Reacting to that statement Sulthana Hayath stated that Urdu was not at all the language of Muslims and it was the language of all Indians. Further she questioned Gandhiji why he said so. Replying to the question Gandhiji had to say ‘I did not say like that. What can we do? News papers are misrepresenting several things’.

### **I CAN NOT SLEEP THAT NIGHT**

Moulana Hasrath Mohani (1878-1951) was the firebrand speaker whose assertion disturbed even Gandhiji when he said ‘what is needed is not self rule but ‘total independence’ much against the stated opinion of Gandhiji. His wife Begum Nishasthunnisa also participated actively in Indian National Movement. Though they had no agreement on the concept of non violence they had enormous respect for each other. He had been putting the proposal of ‘total independence’ to public discussion for a long time in his news paper ‘Urdu-e-Moalla’. Mohani proposed the resolution of ‘total independence’ in 1921 Ahmadabad Congress Conference. Mohani’s speech in the conference in favour of the proposal of total independence disturbed



MOHAMMED GULAM  
MOHIDDIN (1882-1973)

Gandhiji. Gandhiji specially mentioned this in his autobiography. ‘Hasrath Mohani’s speech had been received with such loud acclamations that I was afraid that mine would only be a cry in the wilderness’ (The Story of my experiments with truth, MK Gandhi, Navajeevan Trust, Ahmedabad, 2004 Page. 442).

In 1937 while speaking to Halide Edib, a writer from Turkey, about the argumentative power of Moulana Hasarath Mohani, Mahathma Gandhi said, ‘When I have a talk with Mohani, I cannot sleep in peace’. This reveals the level of Mohani’s argument, how much it disturbed Gandhiji and the extent to

which it influenced him.

Moulana Hasrath Mohani’s wife Nishathunnisa Begum encouraged ‘Swadeshi’ and undertook an extensive campaign on the boycott of foreign goods and other issues. As a part of the programmes they opened ‘Alighar Khilafath Stores’ breathing life into non cooperation movement. Thus they became the first to start the business of Swadeshi cloth in India. Begum Nishathunnisa organised several meetings to promote ‘Swadeshi’ and motivated women in that direction. Gandhiji wrote a special article in ‘Young India’ dated 19May 1920 praising the significant role the couple Begum Nishathunnisa and Moulana Hasrath Mohani played in the Indian National Movement.

### **ELDER BROTHER ABUL KALAM AZAD**

Moulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958), the freedom fighter, can be named as the first among those who moved very closely to Gandhiji. Abul Kalam Azad, who was working in revolutionary organisations revolting against the British colonial rulers, met Gandhiji for the first time in January 1920. Since then he left the path of revolutionaries and followed Gandhian

path of non violence and took part actively in Kilafath and non cooperation movements. He walked along with Gandhiji in all the programmes of Indian National Movement. He opposed the partition of India. As an activist of Indian National Movement he spent more than a decade in jails. He assumed charge as Union Minister for Education of on the insistence Gandhiji on 1947 January 15. As the education minister, in Independent India he made distinctive educational plans and implemented them.

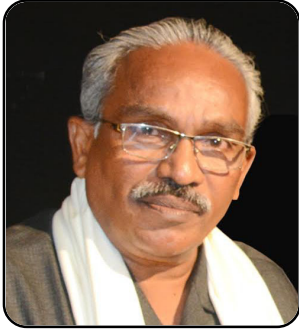
### MOHIDDIN SAAB KAISE HI ?

Mohammed Gulam Mohiddin of Vijaywada, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh state, was the first man from Andhra region to resign from the post of honorary magistrate in response to the call given by Mahathma Gandhi during Khilafath and Non Cooperation Movements. Mentioning this in his book 'Naa Jeevitha Katha (Navyandhramu)', noted freedom fighter Sri Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao wrote, 'my close friend Mohammed Gulam Mohiddin sahib was in the position of First Class Honorary Magistrate. He declared that he would give-up the job along with me. At that time Sriman Chakaravarthula Rajagoplachari was also with us. Till now we are the only two persons in Andhra to give up the positions of membership of legislature and First Class Honorary Magistrate following Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's nonviolent Non cooperation movement. Gandhiji declared this amidst the claps of thousands of people gathered there. He also wrote about this in his journal 'Young India' (Page. 291).

Gulam Mohiddin spent his wealth like water to organize Indian National Congress conference in Vijayawada in 1921. When Sri Ayyadevara informed Gandhiji in person about this by saying that Gulam Mohiddin extended a lot of financial help to congress, Mohiddin responded instantly that he spent his money not for Congress but for his country. Then all the leaders present there were pleased with his response and appreciated him. Mahathma Gandhi never forgot the generosity and hospitality of Mohiddin saab and used to enquire every one from Vijayawada, 'How is Mohiddin saab?' (Narration by Sri LV Ramana, historian, writer, and senior Journalist, Vijayawada).







The theme of this book was published in SAKSHI Telugu daily news paper of 2 October 2019 under the title ‘Gandhi Mulsim Bhai-Bhai’ on the occasion of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The friends and elders who read this article suggested that it would be better if the matter was expanded and published in the form of a

book. This booklet took shape in response to those suggestions. In this booklet I presented all the information in my knowledge about the Muslims who are associated with Gandhiji and those who followed him ever since he as Barrister Gandhiji entered public work in South Africa and shone as the leader of Sathayagraha there till he became Mahatma Gandhi by playing a pivotal role in the National Movement in India. There may be a lot more information which I am not aware of. Hence I humbly request those who are in possession of such information to pass it on to me so that I can include it in the next editions. The friends and elders who read the book in Telugu advised me to publish it in English too. I informed my friends about the advice through Face Book and appealed to them to share the financial burden for publishing it in English and other languages. As my friends and elders responded favourably to my request, it was decided to publish ‘MAHATHMA GANDHI: MUSLIM ASSOCIATES AND FOLLOWERS’ in English and distribute it as a small gift covering total India.

My heartfelt thanks to my friend Sri Bhuvanagiri Venkata Krishna Purnanandam, retired English lecturer who translated this book into English from Telugu and to those friends and elders who extended their financial and moral support for the publication of the book.

– Syed Naseer Ahamed.